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# MESMERISM:

ITS PRETENSIONS AS A SCIENCE  
PHYSIOLOGICALLY CONSIDERED.

BY

J. ALLISON,

LATE SURGEON HON. EAST INDIA COMPANY'S SERVICE,

&c.

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"He whose assent goes beyond his evidence, owes his excess only to prejudice, and does, in effect, own it when he refuses to hear what is offered against it."—LOCKE.

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IF any apology be necessary for the appearance of this little work, it may be very briefly stated. With, perhaps, one exception, arguments against Mesmerism, like those in favour of it, have been made with little reference to the modern doctrines of physiological science; and, instead of data founded on natural principles and immutable laws, the public have almost invariably been furnished with mere declamation and simple denial. The facts and reasoning adduced in the following pages are familiar to the profession; but if the public, for whose use the work is more particularly designed, derive from it any assistance in directing the mind to a proper study of the subject, the object of the author will be fulfilled. To the system, not to the individuals who support or oppose it, have his remarks been directed; and while he concedes to every one the right of private judgment, he at the same time claims a similar privilege for himself.

Bridlington, September, 1844.



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# MESMERISM.

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DURING the last three years almost every town of considerable size in the united kingdom has been visited by itinerant lecturers on MESMERISM, and the displays of credulity and opposition, which they have been almost invariably met, will long be remembered by those who take an interest in public events. Hailed by one portion of the community as the precursors of a new era in mental and physiological science, by another those individuals have been characterised as actuated by the worst motives; in the public and private disputations which have marked their progress, the great object of all investigations—the development of truth—has not unfrequently been forgotten or neglected; and, instead of the calmness and forbearance which ennoble the actions of those who love science, for her own sake, the inferior feelings have gained an ascendancy, and sacrificed the dearest ties which maintain the social system. Ministers of religion, qualified by education, habits of correct reasoning, and position in life; lawyers, whose profession is that of eliciting and comparing the relative value of evidence; physicians, whose proper sphere is in studying the phenomena of life and generalising on facts which daily come under their notice relative to organised beings; persons, whose common sense is proverbial, qualifying them for the important functions of the legislator or juryman; these have respectively manifested the most discordant opinions of Mesmerism; and



while some are ever ready, unconditionally, to condemn or approve, others—it may be more in charity than judgment—hold the safer doctrine, that however great the fiction, some portions of truth may be intermingled with it.

The opposition with which, on the one hand, Mesmerism has had to contend, and, on the other, the support which it has received, may be traced to two sources: to the mental peculiarities of the investigators, and to the nature of the subject itself. The number of believers in, and supporters of, a new doctrine are not more certain criteria of its soundness, than the number of its opponents, or the struggles it has to encounter. It is a truth, having the force of an axiom, that unlimited scepticism is as fallacious as unrestrained credulity. Many instances might be adduced of discoveries, beneficial in their tendency, calculated to ameliorate and improve the condition of our race, ennobling in sentiment, conducive to virtue, and susceptible of promoting our happiness, which have had to contend with the fiercest obloquy.

It would not, perhaps, be difficult to furnish reasons for this opposition; an analysis of the motives of human action, an application of the known laws which govern our mental constitution, and a strict and logical deduction from recognised psychological phenomena, would, rightly applied, contribute to divest this remarkable feature of socialised man of its apparent contradictions. Speculative philosophy teaches, that as rational and intelligent beings, we must naturally hail the approach of any event or circumstance, the operation of which would tend to promote our welfare; that, by unfolding new spheres for industry, and affording us the means for the appropriation of other relations, every triumph of our faculties of discovery and invention must have a beneficial effect on our existence; and that, consequently, every successful investigation of powers hitherto problematical, ought, as calculated to advance our interests, to be welcomed and cherished as a boon from heaven. Here, however, speculative philosophy and that of ordinary life,

are at issue. One individual rejects a new system simply because it is *new* ; in other words, whatever is opposed to those prejudices which he holds as the result of early impressions, or a love of hypothesis ; whatever is opposed to his usual habits of thinking, disposition, or propensities ; these he unconditionally condemns. Another individual, the representative of an extensive class, despises the theory he has never studied, and of which he is consequently unable to form a correct judgment ; the self-esteem of one is offended because the novelty emanated not from his own mind ; the vanity of another prompts him to praise that only which is esteemed by his superiors. Were it to answer our present purpose, we might show how inferior and truly contemptible are the motives by which improvement is impeded ; how party feeling forbids us to countenance that which is sanctioned by our enemy ; how, under the fallacy that our own minds are the standard of excellence, we despise him who differs from us in opinion ; how jealousy, the demon of the soul, begets in us a hatred of the principles of those of whom we are envious ; how the love of contradiction, and the mean satisfaction of vanquishing in argument, cause us to attack the belief of others ; how selfishness, the characteristic of brute nature, would dictate the sacrifice of truth for personal interest ; how, in short, the captivation of the senses, the use of terms which convey little meaning, and the fallacy, that the arrogance and dogmatism of popular leaders are argument and eloquence ; how these form so many sources of error, so many perversions of reason, so many causes of the *suppressio veri*. An author of great learning remarks, that men change their opinions as fashion modifies their dress ; but in matters of utility, involving new theories, and the revolution of opinion, we oftentimes cling to our preconceived views with, at least, more tenacity than to our worn-out garments. There is still much consolation in the reflection, that neither the censure nor the approbation—neither the encouragement nor the opposition of individuals or parties can affect the immutable principles of



truth: Newton's theory of the solar spectrum was not proved to be false, because Pardies and Mariotte denied its accuracy; because the King of Siam disputed that ice existed, it was no proof that water was incapable of assuming the solid form. While we ought freely to assert that TRUTH shrinks from no investigation, let us, at the same time, beware of cavillers—

“Philosophers who darken and put out  
Eternal truth by everlasting doubt.”

But while it is fully admitted that unlimited scepticism is as pernicious as unrestrained credulity, the converse of this is nevertheless equally true; nay more, as the index of a partially developed intellect, unbounded credulity is more pitiable; as that of an uncultivated mind, it is more contemptible. Truth, we repeat, shuns no ordeal; whatever is submitted to our belief or judgment, be its nature what it may, ought to be in conformity with common honesty. It would be unjust and ungenerous to urge that, in estimating the amount of evidence adduced in favour of any subject, the enquirer is actuated by motives alone of self-interest; yet such is being continually insinuated in no measured terms by a certain class. The object of the following pages is not the censure of individuals, but of their principles which we believe to be fallacious and inimical to the public welfare; as moral beings it is our duty to expose falsehood; and it is in vain to contend that prejudice or caprice; that self-love, vanity, or envy; that the love of contradiction, interest, complaisance, or a spirit of mere disputation; that these or other inferior motives sway the minds of those who oppose or reject the doctrines of the magnetisers; while the approbation and support of the many encourage us, the opposition of the few may command our regret; but neither the commendation of one party or the censure of another ought to affect our convictions. As one of those delusions which have so affected the minds of the community for a series of years; as one which, in an eminent degree, so captivate the sentiments; as one in support of whose doctrines such



a mass of apparent evidence has been collected—evidence so apparently convincing—so apparently the result of legitimate induction—and in such apparent accordance with the decision of the senses; as one in which the direct and incidental testimony of so many reputable persons is in such apparent confirmation; in short, as one of those delusions in support of which such an amount of proof is apparently furnished, that even the most disciplined minds have been misled, Mesmerism commands an exalted station. To attempt to prove that the feelings and not the intellect have been the media for the dissemination of the principles of the pseudo-science; that the evidence advanced in support of its doctrines is of the most questionable character; that the testimony in its behalf is that of persons whose reasoning powers were, to say the least, by no means infallible; to attempt to prove these would be to exceed the limits of this little work, and would not, perhaps, in proportion, tend to promote its special design. When anything of a novel and startling character is first revealed to the world, a praise-worthy degree of cautiousness, and a proper exercise of sound discretion ought to be evinced in its reception; but for this very assertion of prudence and mental freedom, charges of the most unwarrantable kind, embodied in the most indecorous language, are continually preferred by a host of credulous votaries. No matter how unsupported by legitimate evidence it may be, no matter how preposterous its nature, still the charges of illiberality and prejudice are reiterated in a tone in which courtesy and candour bear no part. Instead of displaying the data which ought ever to precede belief, they refer to the struggles of the great and good of former times, as well as of the present day; they remind us of the persecutions and obloquy which met the benefactors of our race, and attempt a parallel with themselves and the illustrious Galileo, Harvey, Jenner, and Gall; but they seem to entertain very mistaken views of their relation of those gifted individuals; they forget that Galileo was an accomplished mathematician, and, so far

as the philosophy of his day permitted, well acquainted with the laws of matter and motion, and, therefore, a person well qualified to propound a new system; they forget that Harvey, Jenner, and Gall were excellent anatomists, and well versed in the doctrines of organisation and life which were current in the times in which they respectively lived. Who and what Mesmer was, let history tell; passing events lead to the belief that some of his disciples of the present day are not unworthy of their great master.

Mesmer, the disciple of Hehl, and a believer in the influence of the stars on the human body, was an individual well calculated to promulgate his visionary system; of considerable attainments, of a cautious and penetrating disposition, with a peculiar facility in the employment of verbal mysticism and equivocation, and with a remarkable tact in the use of sophistry, he rendered all these perversions of talent subservient to the acquisition of wealth. The facts that his reputation became so rapidly extended, and that his practice increased so rapidly, that he was under the necessity of engaging assistants, present merely a parallel to the many instances of daring quackery on record; and another element in the resemblance is the termination of his career. The circumstance that one of Mesmer's pupils realized, in a short time, upwards of £100,000, is sufficient to shew the extent of popular infatuation. The Mesmerizers may talk, forsooth, of the opposition and illiberality which meet their views; the present and past history of the delusion shew with what justice; and while they would trace an analogy between their doctrines, and those of Newton, Harvey, and others, inasmuch as the progress of the latter has been as slow as that of the former, and at the sacrifice of as much personal interest, the crowded assemblies, the support of the press, and the pecuniary aggrandisement shew that the followers of Mesmer have little in common with the philosophers to whom they so frequently allude. In France, however, the tide of opinion has somewhat changed; two individuals who



practised Mesmerism for gain, were lately sentenced to hard labour for obtaining money under false pretences ; and thus in morals as in physics, every action is followed by a corresponding re-action. Mesmer lived in more propitious times.

It is next to impossible to obtain a satisfactory definition of the pseudo-science ; we should look in vain for a clear and intelligible explanation of its principles in the numerous works on the subject which have issued from the press ; having no fixed basis, we cannot wonder at the conflicting and contradictory statements of its votaries. It has no doubt, been the lot of the reader to meet with many enthusiasts in the system—persons for whose judgment and acquirements he may otherwise entertain a profound respect—but we venture to affirm that in no two instances has he been able to discover a coincidence in their views. When mention is made of *Animal Mechanics*, we at once understand what is meant, namely, an application of the known laws of statics, dynamics, hydrostatics, &c., in explanation of the phenomena of animal life ; when mention is made of *Animal Chemistry*, we understand an application of the known laws which preside over molecular action, in illustration of the changes effected on matter in the living body ; and reasoning from analogy, we should say without inconsistency, that by Animal Magnetism ought to be understood something relating to the action of the Magnetic fluid on living beings ; but such a definition would not be warranted by well-ascertained facts ; it would, indeed, be thoroughly false. Magnetism, the reader is aware, is but a modification of electricity ; wherever a chemical change is effected, the electric fluid must perform a part ; and as exhibiting a complicated and interesting series of combinations, dissolutions, and recombinations, the animal system undoubtedly contains within itself currents of the fluid for the accomplishment of necessary ends. Some instances are on record of persons who under particular circumstances gave manifestation of the presence of *free* electricity in the body ; but in ordinary cases we have no cause whatever to suppose



that such is the fact ; on the contrary, to say that uncombined electricity is continually emanating from our system, only exposes the ignorance of the speaker of the laws of electrical action, and of the principles of modern physiology. When a volume of atmospheric air is inspired into the lungs, its composition becomes quite changed ; a quantity of the oxygen it contained disappears, and is replaced by a certain quantity of carbonic acid. Although the action of the oxygen on the tissues may have been, as it undoubtedly is, very indirect, still the fact resolves itself into this, that a certain quantity of the atmospheric oxygen has entered into combination with the carbon of the body, and been expired in an æriform state. Now, this change could no more take place in the living organism without the agency of electricity than it could in inanimate matter ; and that every chemical change, whether of combination or decomposition, is accompanied by a corresponding change in the electric relations of substances is a fact too well known to bear dispute. But admitting that such is the case, it ought, nevertheless, to be carefully remembered, that every particle of this imponderable agent which undergoes decomposition in, for example, the combination of the atmospheric oxygen with the carbon of the body, is immediately reproduced in equilibrio in the processes of assimilation, nutrition, and secretion. Forgetting these important truths, the most absurd speculations originate, and beget, in their turn, the most unfounded hypotheses. Another circumstance worthy of notice is, that although the electricity developed in a living body may be immense in quantity, it is still of very low tension, so that even assuming what is false, that each particle can for more than an instant exist in an uncombined state, it is quite obvious that it could not produce what the magnetisers contend for, namely, Mesmerism without contact. But apart from any theory, it has never been proved that free electricity, or its modifications, galvanism and magnetism, have had any share in the pretended results of Mesmer or his followers ; and when

it is considered how easy it is to detect with certainty the slightest current, we may feel convinced, that did such exist during the Mesmeric manifestations, the operators would not be slow to proclaim the fact. On the contrary, the committee appointed by the Royal Academy of France, in the latter part of the last century, stated in their report on the subject—a report, be it remembered, sometimes quoted in support of the disputed doctrines—“That this pretended agent is not magnetism; for on examining the grand reservoir of the fluid by a needle and electrometer, neither magnetism nor electricity could be detected.” Experiments of a similar kind have been repeated by competent persons and with all the refinements which scientific research has undergone since the report above quoted was issued, and with precisely the same results. Besides, the reader need not be informed that the known effects of electricity and galvanism on the human system bear not the most distant resemblance to what are called the mesmeric phenomena; the conjecture, in fine, that Mesmerism and electricity are but modifications and peculiar applications of the same agent is notoriously untenable, and unworthy a more extended enquiry. If, for example, it could be proved that the effects produced by the operator on his subject varied inversely as the square root of the distance between them, we should have a fact analogous to a known law of voltaic action; but such never has been demonstrated, nor is it reasonable to suppose that it ever will. But, say some, we do not contend that the emanation is really the electric fluid, but merely something analogous to it; mind may act on mind as matter acts on matter; the will and mental condition of the agent may affect those of the patient; or there may be an emanation of an animal fluid, an imponderable, impalpable, invisible essence, from person to person, subject perhaps to some of the conditions of light, heat, and electricity, yet differing in many respects from these. Such miserable subterfuges are worthy of the fiction they are intended to support; they are not only entirely gratuitous, but moreover



opposed to everything that moral or physical science unfolds. It is true that because the laws under which any agent manifests itself cannot be demonstrated or defined, it does not follow that such an agent does not exist; but neither Mesmer nor any of his disciples have rendered it probable, much less proved, that any emanation takes place from the operator to his subject; nor is it consistent with the occurrences of every day life that mind *directly* influences mind; the well known phenomena of sympathy are explicable on simpler and more rational principles. Man has no innate ideas; whatever the affections or emotions of his mind may be, their primary source is through the organs of sensation; and the influence of one individual, mentally, over another, is but an expression and illustration of the fact. To an ignorance or misrepresentation of these truths may be traced many of the incoherencies of the magnetizers; the more plausible, because more reasonable opinion, is daily progressing that the mesmeric condition is merely subjective, having no necessary connexion with any external person or thing.

The sentiments are a class of mental faculties which contribute much to our individual and social happiness; they give a pure and dignified character to religion and virtue, they nerve the arm of the patriot, and communicate to the eye of the poet its fire; but under the entire dominion of no other powers are we so subject to error, or so liable to get into difficulty and danger; under their direction we are inspired with the most elevated and pleasureable emotions, but, unless they be under the decided control of the intellect, caprice, the love of the marvellous, the weakest species of enthusiasm, and their invariable results, derision and shame, are produced. Fashion is continually changing: an article of dress unknown a few months ago, to-day receives unbounded admiration and praise, and in a few months hence will be quietly consigned to obscurity; but suppose a column of, for example, the Ionic Order to be presented to an individual of any age or country, having any pretension to taste, he at once perceives, as if it were intuitively, that it is a



work of art capable of exciting his permanent feelings of admiration. Here we have a striking contrast, but one which is capable to a certain extent of analysis. Fashion in dress is attractive in a great measure on account of its novelty ; it is not always pleasing in the ratio of its utility or accordance with refined judgment ; and when the intellect discovers the imposition, shall we call it, which has been practised by the emotions, a reaction is produced, and with it a change ; on the contrary, the view of the piece of architecture produces an immediate and indelible impression of beauty and correctness ; with its dimensions our ideas of proportion and fitness are gratified ; and wherever the column appears, there we behold what pleases the taste and conforms to reason. Thus, when we are told—and that without the shadow of proof—that there is an immaterial something pervading the whole of space, which man can control, concentrate, and modify ; that by means of this mysterious something, one mind may act upon another, independently of distance or intervention ; that by means of it, the senses may be transposed and quickened, and the gift of prophecy superadded ; and that this unknown fluid is capable of alleviating our distress, reducing the sum of human misery, and thus causing life's streamlet to glide more smoothly to its rest ; when we are told of these—fictions though they be—our love of the marvellous, our love of novelty, and our more generous feelings of benevolence are pleased and gratified. When we are gravely informed, however, that the founder of the doctrine mesmerized the *sun*, which in its turn communicated its influence to the planets and the living creatures on their surface ; that one individual in the “mesmeric” state was on the surface of the earth and on that of the moon at one and the same time, and that while in one of the lunar valleys he saw an inscription on a monument, and at the same time made a copy of it to his terrestrial friends ; that one of the disciples in this country magnetized the *German Ocean*, so that it resembled the Lethe of fable ; and that another on the western Continent, by means of a few innocent passes of

the hand suspended the power of gravitation,<sup>v</sup> and thus fulfilled the conditions of that mechanical paradox, the flying machine ; when we are seriously told of these and other absurdities, our ideas of propriety are shocked, and reason bids us reject the preposterous and puerile hypothesis which they involve. So true is it, that the sublime often merges in the ridiculous. Within a few years the reader has seen a remarkable impulse given to the delusion of which we write ; he has seen the people from the peer to the peasant fondle and caress it, as if it were the offspring of truth ; he has seen its professors idolized and rewarded, as if by the system they should realize the Elysium of old ; and he has seen those whose honesty and intelligence prompted them to expose the fallacy, reviled and abused, nay even characterised as the barriers to improvement, the enslavers of mind, and the enemies of their race. But those who have watched the progress of public affairs during this brief space, have also witnessed the dawn of a moral revolution as important, perhaps, in its nature and consequences, as some of those which have convulsed the political world ; they have, indeed, witnessed the consummation of what might have been predicted, the return of the popular mind to its own propriety. The admiration of what was new and wonderful captivated and ensnared ; reason, in the detection of the fraud, regains her supremacy.

We need not attempt to render a definition of Mesmerism ; it cannot be expected that those who deny its validity should define that which puzzles its most ardent votaries ; but as a matter of curiosity, and a proof that we exaggerate nothing, the following exparte statements are worthy of attention. Animal Magnetism, says Mesmer, is a fluid universally diffused ; it is the medium of a mutual influence between the heavenly bodies, the earth, and animated bodies, it is continuous so as to have no void ; its subtilty admits of no comparison ; it is capable of receiving, propagating, continuing, all the impressions of motion ; it is susceptible of flux and reflux, The animal body experiences the effect of this agent ; by insinuating itself into



the substance of the nerves, it affects them immediately. There are observed particularly in the human body, properties analogous to those of the magnet ; and in it are discerned poles equally different and opposite. The action and virtues of animal magnetism may be communicated from one body to other bodies, animate and inanimate, at a remote distance without the aid of any immediate body ; it is increased and reflected by mirrors ; communicated, propagated, augmented by sound ; its virtues may be accumulated, concentrated, transported ; it cures diseases, and presents a universal method of healing and preserving mankind. Deslong, a disciple of Mesmer, during the time the subject was undergoing a scientific investigation presented the world with a similar definition and explanation ; he maintained that Animal Magnetism is a universal fluid, constituting an absolute plenum in nature, and the medium of all mutual influence between the celestial bodies and between the earth and animal bodies ; that it is the most subtile fluid in nature ; that animals are subjected to it through the medium of the nerves ; that the human body has poles and other properties analogous to the magnet ; that its action and virtue may be communicated from one body to another, whether animate or inanimate ; that it operates at a great distance, when not interrupted ; that it is increased and reflected by mirrors ; and communicated, propagated, and increased by *sound* ; that all animals are not equally affected by it ; and that the human body is liable to but one disease, which Animal Magnetism alone is capable of curing. The phenomena in the case of the magnetizer and the person magnetized have been stated with as much precision as if they were warranted by facts ; the operator, for example, in whom the positive effects are supposed to be manifested, must be of a stronger temperament than the patient, the subject of the negative results ; and the hand with which he makes the passes must not be covered by any non-conductor of electricity. The pretended phenomena in the magnetizer are a strengthening of the vital powers, a mild excitement over the



surface of the body, a restoration of the disturbed equilibrium in disease, and a suppression of excited nervous action. The degrees of the "magnetic" state have been reckoned six: increase of temperature, heaviness, loss of speech, and increased sensibility; convulsions, "catalepsy," and loss of sensibility; second consciousness and somnambulism; clairvoyance, knowledge of past events, the gift of prophecy and heavenly felicity. Such is a brief outline of the system of Mesmer; its sources are authentic, and, whatever more recent innovations may have effected, cannot be fairly disputed. As it would be foreign to the subject of these pages to present an epitome of what has been written on the subject, it is unnecessary to examine what are the parts of it to which some assent and from which others differ; for it is a fact that while some of the advocates of the system qualify the expressions of Mesmer and his earlier followers, others entirely reject them and offer more plausible and simple explanations in their stead. The pretensions of some portions of Mesmer's hypothesis as a science have been already noticed; other parts of it will be considered in the following pages; but it may not be irrelevant in this place to remark, that from beginning to end his propositions are mere assumptions, without proof or any foundation in nature, and moreover opposed to well known physical facts. Yet

"There is a soul of good in all things evil,  
Could men observingly distil it out."

We reiterate the truth, that unlimited scepticism is as fallacious as unrestrained credulity. Some time ago when Lafontaine, in blessed ignorance of the truth, was trying to fulfil the objects of his mission to England, Mr. Braid of Manchester—a gentleman who by his conduct and writings has proved himself to be, in every sense of the word, a philosopher—had his attention happily arrested by some remarkable circumstances during the manipulations of the lecturer. An individual on whom Lafontaine was pretending to experiment, was suddenly deprived of volition and consciousness, and assumed that peculiar cata-

leptic state of which we have heard so much ; this, of course, was ascribed by the operator to the influence of Mesmerism, but Mr. Braid and others took a more common-sense view of the subject, and a series of experiments subsequently established the fact that this remarkable state had no more relationship to Animal Magnetism than it had to demonology ; that the phenomenon was as susceptible of scientific and correct rationalia as a fit of hysteria, or a chemical decomposition. To this peculiar physiological state the name of HYPNOTISM has been given : it is produced neither by passes nor any other gesticulations, but by fixing the eye on any object, and abstracting the attention ; it has no nearer relation to magnetism than the course of events has to the nonsensical predictions of “ Zadkiel ;” it had, no doubt, been frequently witnessed by Mesmer and others, but by them it had been misrepresented, its phenomena exaggerated, and to account for them, causes assigned as fanciful as false. The result, however, has been a boon to theoretical science, and, what is of more importance, an accession to the list of remedial means ; an illustration of the familiar maxim, that good may originate in evil. We have still lingering out a miserable existence a modification of the Egyptian imposition of magic ; education is not yet sufficiently advanced to extinguish the Gothic and Celtic superstitions of fairy-land ; in one of our capitals the revival of the absurdities of transmutation have produced awe and indecision ; the wicked abuse of one of nature’s greatest gifts has been effected under the name of Hydropathy ; and Swift’s philosopher, who spent nearly eight years in trying to extract sunbeams from cucumbers, for the production of portable light, has, we fear, many living representatives : but of all the delusions which avarice or fatuity have encouraged—of all the systems under which the popular mind has been captivated—Animal Magnetism stands without a rival. An unhallowed and pernicious alliance has been attempted between this tissue of fraud and phrenology ; we say unhallowed because it is unnatural—pernicious



because it is founded on error ; it is a union without mutual consent, between falsehood and truth ; and one which is not, perhaps, destined to exist beyond a limited period.

### PHRENO-MESMERISM

Is a fiction of very recent origin. To whom belongs the disgrace of the invention is a question of little moment ; whether it emanated from England or America, is a subject of dispute which in no wise affects the nature of the thing ; but of all the absurdities which have been incorporated in the doctrines of Mesmer, this most assuredly is the weakest and most ridiculous. Founded on extreme ignorance or misrepresentation of natural facts and laws, opposed to obvious and well-known anatomical and physiological truths, it presents not only a tissue of contradictions, but involves some of the most pitiable superstitions, some of the grossest delusions, and some of the most direct frauds which evade the cognizance of the magistrate. In almost every town of considerable size, institutions have been for many years in existence, one object of which is popular instruction in the arts and sciences ; from the constitution of those associations, the number of members, and the anxiety evinced for improvement, the most pleasing results have been anticipated. Among other subjects, lectures have been delivered on organisation and life ; and appealing, as that science does, to the feelings of self-preservation and comfort, it demands, and apparently has received the deepest consideration. We say *apparently* ; not really, for had even a moderate degree of attention been bestowed on the statements of competent persons who have so frequently appeared as lecturers, the public would have known more of their corporeal and mental constitution, and with more correct ideas of their relation to external objects, would ere this have placed their veto on the disgraceful and infamous proceedings which, under the guise of philosophy, have held their minds in thralldom. Works on physiology, written in a fascinating style, and dedicated to the people, have



for many years past issued from the press ; and judging from the rapidity with which they have been multiplied, and the number of editions which some of them have reached, it may be concluded that they meet with purchasers ; but, supposing them to be read in the same proportion, the progress of Phreno-mesmerism is a certain index of the fact, that the impressions made have been in fading colours and exceedingly evanescent. Members of the medical profession are daily exposed to blame and obloquy for hesitating to subscribe belief to the novel doctrines of the Mesmerists ; the wonder is not that much scepticism prevails, but that any, whose character for consistency and integrity is above suspicion, should even indirectly countenance such a series of incongruities.

That the brain is the centre of that influence on which depend sensation and motion ; that it is the medium through which are manifested the feelings, the sentiments, and the intellect ; that through it are experienced the hopes and joys, the cares and sorrows, the sweets and bitters, which fill the cup of our existence ; that it is, in short, the material instrument of the mind, is a truth which few are now unthinking enough to deny. No definite idea of mind unassociated with matter can possibly be formed ; wherever the mental principle manifests itself, there, also, must there be a brain ; a lesion of any other corporeal part or organ does not necessarily interfere with the powers of thought, but an injury of the cerebral mass invariably affects them in a corresponding degree ; let a certain amount of pressure only be made upon the brain, and loss of consciousness is the result ; any other organ may be lacerated or even removed, while the mind with calmness and serenity views the ravages of the outward storm. In morbid conditions of the brain the mental phenomena undergo certain modifications ; in proportion to the severity of the disease, we behold the aberrations of the mind from the merest hallucination to the demonical raving of insanity ; and this being indisputably the truth, the converse equally maintains, for it is an important fact, and

ought to be impressed on every mind as an axiom, that no derangement of intellect or feeling can possibly occur in the absence of an organic change. To dispute these principles would be to deny the relations between the cause and its sequence, between the sequence and its necessary antecedent; and would virtually recognize as true that which the generality of mankind intuitively reject, that the thinking principle is subject to the same conditions as material things, to change and extinction—to decay and dissolution. That we feel and perceive, that we remember and reason, that we associate and abstract, that we are affected by awe, hope, the sense of right and wrong, and our moral relations to other beings, are truths of which we are convinced both by consciousness and observation; and these being distinct faculties of the mind, subject to distinct modes of action, it does not seem, *a priori*, improbable that different parts of the organ of the mind may have different functions corresponding with, and related to, those powers. No process of reasoning, independent of actual observation, could lead either to an affirmative or negative result in such a matter; in the wide field of nature alone, where all may see and learn, can such views be properly tested; and an almost unlimited amount of evidence, collected by different individuals, in various regions of the globe, and among every variety of the human race, appears to prove that mental and cerebral peculiarities are co-existent and correlative, and that, in general, wherever a remarkable characteristic trait is observed, there also may an equally remarkable cerebral developement be found. He who admits the coincidence between a vigorous intellect and a massive forehead, between high cerebral developement and remarkable moral action, between a relatively large mass of brain posteriorly and a passionate and sensual disposition, virtually recognizes the truth of the theory, that different parts of the brain have different functions. Extended observation on living beings, and the exercise of judgment, can alone convince him of the truth of Phrenology in its details; and however much his prepossessions may be



against the system, a fair and candid examination may include him in the list of those converts whose studies were begun in doubt and prejudice. That the external conformation of the head corresponds with that of the enclosed organ is, with certain exceptions, true ; in the majority of instances every convexity or concavity on the surface of the cranium is accompanied with a corresponding convexity or concavity on the surface of the brain ; and the absolute and relative size of the brain in any region being believed to be an index of the power and capabilities of a mental faculty, the form of the skull is presumed to denote what that size may be, and, consequently, what the power. The tyro in Phrenology learns the names and uses of the cerebral organs from a book ; this is succeeded by the study of a bust on which the organs are marked ; and [forgetting that the head on which he practises is dead, instead of living, clay, he feels himself prepared to give analysis of character. This is not unfrequently the case with itinerant lecturers ; the science is hence occasionally brought into ridicule and disrepute ; and to this ignorance on the part of lecturers and audiences may be traced to a certain extent the fiction of Phreno-mesmerism.

By Phreno-mesmerism is generally understood the excitation of the phrenological organs by contact with, or pointing to, the skin or hair directly over them during the “mesmeric” state ; but whether by “demesmerising” them or the reverse, the initiated themselves cannot agree. Supposing that a transference of some kind of influence takes place from the operator to the patient, or *vice versa*, it is obvious that it cannot do so directly to influence the brain, because the finger or other conductor cannot come into immediate contact with that organ ; there are first, the hair, then the skin—a very complex organ—next a musculo-tendinous expansion, and, following the same order, the pericranium, the bone—consisting of two distinct tables, and an interposed cancellated structure—the layers of the dura mater, the reflexions of the arachnoid membrane, and the pia mater ; these, besides callular membrane must be



traversed by the “magnetic” or other “influence” before it can pass to or from the brain ; and this seems *a prima facie* evidence that no such transfer can take place. But the influence has been declared to be magnetic, which may act independent of such interposition ; yet, as has been already shewn, such an influence it cannot be ; another guess, and the fluid may be, as Mesmer asserts it is, something which pervades all nature, although not magnetic ; this imaginary something, it has been asserted both by the founder of the system and his followers, cotemporary and more recent, possesses properties analogous to light, and may therefore not be cognizable by the galvanometer. Now, light, the reader is aware, suffers a remarkable change in passing at an angle less than ninety degrees through media of different densities ; one portion of it is reflected, another refracted, while a third is absorbed and disappears ; the ray, then, continues not in the same line throughout, but reappears on the opposite side of the transparent body at a point without the line of incidence, and produces well known optical illusions. Prosecuting the analogy, the hypothetical “influence” of the magnetizer must necessarily in its transit pass through substances of very different structure and density ; tracing it from without, inwards, supposing it to enter at an angle with the axis of the organ—and the operators seem not at all anxious about finding where the axes are—it must, in the first place, suffer a partial reflection, refraction, and absorption as it passes between the finger and the hair ; in the second place, between the latter and the musculo-membranous expansion ; third, between the latter and the skull—which, in the individuals who offer themselves for mesmeric experiments, it may be presumed, is not of the thinnest ; fourth, between the skull and the membranes ; and lastly, between the last and the organ itself. Under all these reflexions, refractions, and absorptions which the “influence” may be supposed to undergo, it is rather paradoxical that it should always affect the subjacent organ, and no other ; it is more consistent with the analogy, and consequently more

reasonable, to believe that in those regions where the organs are numerous and their area small, the "influence" should fall not on the organ intended, but on one in juxtaposition. But all who have witnessed experiments in Phreno-mesmerism must have remarked how promptly trained persons answer to the touch, and how admirably correct they are in manifesting what they conceive to be the natural language of the organ; they, in fact, prove too much for the interests of their calling. If any reliance were to be placed on the experiments of the Phreno-mesmerist, they would lead to a rejection of that which many believe to be a fundamental truth in the pseudo-science, that the brain is the organ of the mind; or what amounts to the same thing, to the fallacy that cerebral matter is not necessary to the manifestation of the thinking principle, and that any other organ, or no organ at all, may supersede the use of the great central one. Every person who has witnessed the recent exhibitions of the magnetizers is aware that they pretend to excite among others the organs of the perceptive faculties, such as Size, Weight, Colour, and Locality; and that by placing the finger in contact with the skin over these organs, or by pointing. Now it is a well known fact that after the age of twelve a remarkable separation takes place between the inner and outer tables of the skull in the lower part of the forehead, and that this space becomes occupied merely by a lining of mucous membrane, and atmospheric air: and the external appearance being thus no positive index of the form of the brain, constitutes a difficulty which phrenologists themselves are ready to admit. The most cursory examination of a phrenological bust will shew how comparatively small is the space allotted to each organ in this region, twelve at least being congregated together; and practical men are ever at a loss to define the limits of each. But the Phreno-mesmerist, strong in the belief that previous training has made himself and patient familiar with the parts to be enacted, hesitates not to produce manifestations of the organs of perception to the admiring wonder of his too credulous friends; the finger is applied over what



the operator declares to be the organ of Colour, and the subject of his experiment describes the appearance of dazzling colours ; over Locality, and he delights his hearers with minute topography. If it be true that fools rush in where angels fear to tread, it is not less so that ignorance or cunning prompts men to actions which their superiors in knowledge and moral feeling repudiate. All the cerebral organs are double ; even those which appear to lie in the mesial line are really so ; and circumstances arising from the ignorance of, or inattention to, this fact on the part of the lecturer, afford strong presumptive evidence against the truth of Phreno-Mesmerism. Every person who has attended to the manipulations of the magnetizers must have observed how careful they are to place the finger directly over the organ they wish to excite ; but to all those which lie in the mesial line—an imaginary line which divides the body into two equal and symmetrical halves—the finger is not always so applied. On looking at a bust one of the first impressions is, that many of the organs are single, such, for example, as Individuality, Comparison, and Benevolence : but in these, and many other respects, it does not properly represent what occurs in nature, and consequently is apt to convey false impressions. Any one who has ever seen a brain dissected, can never forget one remarkable feature, that a large sulcus or cleft extends on its superior aspect in a direction from before, backwards ; that in the natural state this sulcus is occupied by membranes and blood vessels ; and that it forms a broad line of demarcation between each one of those organs which in charts and busts are marked as single. When the finger of the Mesmerist is placed on the mesial line, over what he conceives to be, for example, Veneration, his patient, well taught, no doubt, immediately kneels in the attitude of prayer ; and in this posture he continues, as in duty bound, till the finger is removed. But the unquestionable fact is that, in nine out of ten instances, there is no phrenological organ

whatever underneath the finger ; and that this experiment also proves too much. Supposing the finger to be placed in the centre of the organ to which we have alluded, namely, Veneration, as it is marked on the bust, the following parts are found to lie underneath, and in this order : the hair, the skin, the aponeurotic expansion between the two portions of the occipitofrontalis muscle, the pericranium, the bone, the membranes of the brain, the superior and inferior longitudinal sinuses or veins, the corpus callosum, the fornix, the commissura mollis, and pituitary gland. The first seven structures enumerated, the most accomplished caviller will admit, have nothing whatever to do directly with the manifestation of the mind ; they either serve for the protection and support of the brain, or transmit the venous blood from the organ to other vessels ; no cerebral matter, such as that which they protect, enters into their composition. The remaining parts, although, properly speaking, belonging to, and indeed forming a portion of, the encephalic mass, are either mere media for the transmission of the nervous force, or connected with the phenomena of vegetative life ; neither do their situation nor structure in any way countenance the supposition that they are directly related to the moral faculties ; and hence it may be safely inferred that, even admitting what is untenable, the existence of a magnetic current from the operator to his patient, the organ of Veneration cannot be excited by placing the finger on the hair over those subjacent structures. Professors of Phreno-Mesmerism may attempt to deny, that when the organs which are marked in the charts as single are excited, the finger is ever placed, strictly speaking, on the mesial line ; but if it be not so placed in the majority of cases, it is the evident design of the magnetiser that it should be so ; and in proof of this the writer need not only appeal to his own observation, but to that of every competent and candid phrenologist who has witnessed the recent exhibitions on the subject. To practice the deception more completely and successfully, those pioneers in this novel



species of fraud ought to place the finger considerably without the mesial line ; or more plausibly still, two fingers should be used, one on each side. Falsehood, as well as truth, possesses intrinsic evidence of its nature ; the principles of Phreno-Mesmerism are at variance with themselves ; and it is either a want of knowledge or reflection, or, what is more lamentable, a lack of common honesty, that encourages their reception.

If the doctrines of Phreno-Mesmerism be true, then it necessarily follows that the brain is not the organ of the mind ; that, indeed, its manifestations may be elicited through the medium of parts which bear no resemblance to cerebral substance. For the sake of convenience, the organs of Form and Language are marked respectively at the upper part of the nose and on the eye ; not that these organs are situated where an inspection of the bust merely would seem to indicate, but that, in the natural position of the parts, these regions are, in an anatomical sense, the nearest local approximation to the organs named ; and no person who knows anything of the matter can possibly be mistaken by this conventional mode of expression. The organ of Form is, properly speaking, situated in the inferior part of the anterior lobes of the brain, on each side of a process of bone, the crista galli ; the method of judging of its size, is by observing the distance between the eyes, and assuming this as an index of the breadth of the organ. It is hence obvious that no natural relationship subsists between the upper part of the nose and the power of distinguishing forms ; the connection is merely arbitrary and artificial ; and this is so generally understood by students of phrenology, that it is a matter of surprise that any misapprehension should exist. The organ of Language, as has been stated, is marked on charts and busts on the eye ; but, as in the case of Form, this arrangement is quite conventional, and only useful in practice. Language, properly, is situated above the eye, and separated from it by the bone which forms the roof of the orbit ; when its length is relatively great, it pushes the eye forwards, and when thick,

outwards and downwards ; but it can never be insinuated that the faculty which enables us to acquire and use words and other signs to convey our ideas, has its locality in the eye ; and whatever countenances such a fiction is undoubtedly the offspring of ignorance or fraud. Now, if the reader will call to his recollection any instance when the organs of an individual during the pretended mesmeric state were excited, he will also recollect that before the manifestations of Wit, for example, could be educed, the eyelids were always carefully pressed or rubbed by the operator ; this the spectators would understand was for the purpose of exciting Language, knowing, of course, that the sense of the ludicrous could not be made so apparent without the employment of words ; and the performance would thus bear the semblance of a philosophical experiment. Again, in the “clairvoyant” stage, when a pencil is put into the hand of the patient, the magnetizer with quite a scientific tact takes the nose between his fingers for the purpose, as he says, of exciting the organ of Form, but, in reality, of pinching slightly that facial appendage, when his confidant is likely to err ; and thus the admiring multitude, ignorant even of the evidence and principles on which phrenology is based, awards the applause which it conceives is due. But, as has been shewn, the organs of Language and Form cannot be excited by such a method, even granting the agency of a magnetic fluid ; because no mental instruments exist in the parts touched ; and to contend that the experiments to which allusion has been made are of a nature worthy to be believed, is, therefore, virtually to admit that the brain alone is not the organ of the mind. As soon, truly, might we expect to excite Benevolence by pinching the ear, as Form or Language by pressing the nose or eyeballs. It may be asserted in refutation of these remarks, that when the operator excites Form, he presses against the orbital arch of the frontal bone ; and that when Language is manifested the finger is thrust backwards into the orbit ; but admitting what is only partially correct, that the fingers would in these cases approach the real



situation of the organs, it is nevertheless true that lecturers on Phreno-mesmerism are not always sufficiently circumspect or well informed to attend to such things ; otherwise they would avoid many outrages on common sense, and render their scheme less paradoxical than it is. Those who have paid much attention to Phreno-mesmeric manœuvres will be best able to judge of the correctness of the charge, and the plausibility of the defence. Nothing need be said of the mode in which the mental manifestations take place in the subjects of the experiments ; although some may be tolerably correct and evince a high imitative power, others, it is notorious, are so utterly erroneous, and so outrageously opposed to all that is known regarding the natural language of the mental faculties, as to excite disgust in those who are inclined to take a charitable and favourable view of the subject ; and convey a decided impression that professors of the art are not always happy in the choice of their patients, or successful in their disgraceful education.

But opposed to what has been stated, persons of talent and integrity, on whom every reliance may be placed, maintain that they have repeatedly witnessed experiments in Phreno-mesmerism where no fraudulent agreement could possibly subsist between the parties : that previous knowledge of the operator and patient, the invariable honesty of character which they had hitherto maintained, and the position in society which they held, precluded every idea of collusion ; and that, therefore, on the evidence of their senses, and the natural decision of their judgment, they were compelled to yield assent to the theory of Phreno-mesmerism. It is quite possible that such persons might be deluded without involving the reputation of those engaged in the experiments ; these, indeed, might be themselves deceived ; and hence, as in other inquiries, wrong inferences might be made, and false theories originated. That such do take place, there is every reason to believe ; and things apparently irreconcilable may be thus accounted for. Persons of a lively imagination, credulous, fond of novelty, and whatever is

wonderful or strange, and whose reasoning powers are very limited or have not been much exercised, are more prone to be misled either in the capacity of agent or subject; in the first instance, with a perfect belief in the potency of the gesticulations, he not only feels confident himself but inspires confidence in the other, and the influence becomes reciprocal; the patient, according to Mesmer and to common observation, the weaker of the two in a moral sense, is under the strong impression, derived from reading, conversation, and actual observation—for who now does not read, and hear, and see many extraordinary things respecting Mesmerism?—that after certain processes he must sink into a passive state, and that on certain parts of the head being touched he must perform certain acts; and that under this impression, the result is successful in proportion to its force, the number of times it has been brought into requisition, and the mental constitution of the patient. That this mode of accounting for a few of the cases adduced in support of the system may be correct is not only possible but highly probable; it is in perfect accordance with facts which daily come under our notice; the same principles account for the host of imaginary diseases, and equally imaginary cures which have become proverbial; the knowledge of them forms a key to many of the anomalous proceedings which cause communities and individuals to occupy a conspicuous position among their fellows. To this subject the words of Shakspeare are peculiarly applicable:—

“The world is still deceived with ornament;  
 What damned error, but some sober brow  
 Will bless it and approve it with a text?  
 There is no vice so simple but assumes  
 Some mark of virtue on its outward parts.”

An attempt has been made to reconcile the pretended phenomena of Phreno-mesmerism with known physiological laws, by attributing them to sympathy in connexion with the anatomical relation which some parts bear to others; and also to an inversion of the natural sequence of passion and action. The com-



pressed lips, the piercing gaze, and erect bearing, though unaccompanied by words, are never misunderstood ; on the contrary they may influence the spectator, and cause him to participate in the same feeling and action : on this depends the success of pantomime. When certain emotions of the mind occur, certain active muscular combinations are manifested ; and the two stand to each other in the relation of cause and effect. It may be true, that to a limited extent this relation may be inverted, so that by acting on certain combinations of nerves at the periphery of the body, certain mental states may be induced in consequence of a natural association, or the force of habit ; but to try to account for the extravagances of Phreno-mesmerism on these principles would be futile ; the good sense of the gentleman who suggested them in elucidation of this subject, prompted him to reject as untenable the ordinary hypothesis ; and evidently inclined to regard with an amiable feeling the statements of those who were scarcely worthy of credence, he thus attempted to render them somewhat in accordance with known facts. Until it can be shewn, however, that there are anatomical and physiological relations subsisting between the cerebral organs and the nerves which ramify in the skin over them, this explanation cannot be generally admitted.

In the greater number of instances Phreno-mesmerism depends for success on a fraudulent connexion between the individuals practising it. It is a fact perhaps not generally known, yet, nevertheless, capable of proof beyond a doubt, that in the larger towns young persons are regularly trained by each other, and even by their parents, for the purpose, as the case may be, either of proving or confuting the doctrine in question ; and that the same *artiste* may appear as required to support two opposite interests. A denial of these truths will be of no avail ; for obvious reasons, it would be imprudent to particularize cases ; they are familiar to many, and to none more so than to those who appear as public lecturers in support of the imposition. It not unfrequently occurs that the public is dis-

satisfied with the results produced on those who appear to be in the operator's pay ; a demand is made that some disinterested person be selected from the company for the purpose of verifying the doctrine ; and it not unusually happens that when this is complied with, the effect is at first view surprising. The following case may be taken in illustration. A short time ago, an itinerant lecturer on Mesmerism visited this town, and with him two youths who it appeared accompanied him from place to place, and were made the subjects of the experiments ; but although the results on these persons seemed satisfactory, still some of the spectators remained incredulous ; and a request was made that some one known to them, but having no personal acquaintance with the lecturer, should be selected as a more proper patient. A boy about fifteen years of age, in the service of a respectable farmer in the neighbourhood, was procured on the following evening ; there appeared no reason whatever to suppose that he had ever read, heard, or seen, any thing of Mesmerism ; and bearing, as he did, the aspect of a simple, disingenious, unsophisticated, country lad, the audience seemed satisfied that no collusion could possibly exist. Having had his attention arrested by the operator by steadily looking at his eyes, in a few minutes he appeared to merge into the hypnotic state ; his eyes were closed, and altogether he seemed perfectly passive. The most breathless attention now pervaded the hall, and every one evinced the most anxious expectation ; the finger of the lecturer was applied to the head, and a slight muscular movement followed ; the finger was removed and replaced over another organ, and a trifling modification took place in the action of the boy ; again pressure was made over another part of the brain, still no decided manifestation followed ; *but when the approximated eyelids were rubbed, the patient began to speak.* Many professed to believe the results to be confirmative of the truth of Phreno-mesmerism ; others, that if the experiment was not very decisive, it at least proved that the application of the finger to the head of the boy had some influence on



his mental state, and that some unknown cause had interfered to prevent the usual effect ; while a few observing the peculiar hesitating manner of the boy, the expression of his sense of the ludicrous when the spectators admired, and the fact that, with the exception of speech resulting from pressure on the eyes, not the slightest trace of particular mental manifestations followed the imposition of the finger over particular organs, were forcibly impressed with the belief that he was attempting to practise a deception. Accordingly a private meeting took place at the house of a medical gentleman, to which the boy was brought, and the results of the experiments instituted were exceedingly satisfactory. Fixing the boy's attention as before, he dropped into a similar state ; and, the writer hinting that as the boy's disposition was somewhat quarrelsome, the company ought to beware, the finger was placed over Benevolence, and the action which followed was an indiscriminate pugilistic attack ; while in this apparently excited state it was proposed to bring into action the opposing faculty of Benevolence, pressure was made over Destructiveness however, and the boy not only immediately became calm, but began to distribute the articles in his possession among the company ; the finger was placed on Veneration, while intimation was given for the spectators to look to their pockets, and the propensity to steal was directly manifested ; the skin over Acquisitiveness was then touched and an appeal made to the patient's honesty, and the articles of which he would have possessed himself were immediately restored ; pressure over Comparison was made, and something having been whispered about a child, the boy immediately assumed the attitude and action of the nurse. An objection was made to these experiments, that they proved nothing because the manifestations produced might be the consequence of ideas resulting from suggestion and leading questions. To obviate this, the finger was placed on Cautiousness, and a strict silence preserved ; the boy began to sing ; over Tune, and no action followed. These and other experi-

ments were deemed quite conclusive by seven out of the nine persons who witnessed them. It is difficult sometimes to imagine what the motives of others may be ; and those which influenced the remaining two are best known to themselves, for they have never been intelligibly expressed. It may be mentioned that it was suggested to produce deafness and insensibility to pain, by making passes over the boy's hand, which was placed across his knee ; the gesticulations having been performed, he could not be made to answer by any questions however loudly addressed to him ; but when it was proposed to apply a caustic liquid to the hand, to test the pretended insensibility to pain, the patient belied his profession by quietly placing his hand in his pocket. This, together with the boy's manner throughout, clearly proved that his consciousness was intact. In considering these things, one cannot help associating them with the report of the French Academicians already alluded to : — “ We tried Animal Magnetism upon those who professed great susceptibility of its influence, and all its ordinary effects were produced when nothing was done.” It was afterwards ascertained that the boy had been subjected to a course of private training imperfectly conducted. Yet, in allusion to Phrenomesmerism, a great and deservedly popular authority thus writes :—“ Oh, that Gall could have lived to see this day—these astonishing proofs of the truth of Phrenology—proofs by which I have at once converted irresistibly to the firmest conviction of the truth of Phrenology those who could never be induced before to bestow a moment's attention upon it. I have made more persons phrenologists during the last month than in all my previous life.”

### CLAIRVOYANCE,

Or the transposition of the senses, if not more physiologically probable, is, at least, much more plausible than Phrenomesmerism. In man, and the higher classes of animals, the organs of sensation are, for the most part, well defined, and the nerves



which supply them capable of demonstration ; but in the invertebrata, although there is reason to suppose that the senses, where they exist, are equally distinct, still positive proofs that such is the fact, are in many instances wanting. There are many animals low in the scale of being, which, like plants, are influenced by stimuli, where neither nerves nor organs of sensation apparently exist ; vegetables, it is well known, turn towards the light with an almost instinctive force, and close or expand their leaves and flowers as the light is excluded or admitted ; zoophytes expand or contract their bodies under similar circumstances ; the motions of the medusae, gregarious acalepha, and free-moving hydrae, are in all probability attributable to the same causes ; and it is well known that at great oceanic depths, where no light ever reaches, vegetable and animal life disappears. Vibrations in aerial and liquid media affect some animals so much as to countenance the opinion that a generally diffused sensibility, capable of taking cognizance of all kinds of impressions, exists ; and hence the probability that as functions similar to those in the lower objects of creation are exercised by others higher in the scale, man may himself possess powers of a like kind, which under favourable circumstances may become manifest. But light cannot be properly studied only in its relation to the senses ; although the most admirable adaptation of the eye to this agent may be demonstrated, still there is no doubt that the luminous principle existed anterior to organisation, and as now, presided over many of the phenomena of nature. The rays of the sun have a remarkable influence on the forces which concur in the development of molecular action ; they have likewise, it is well known, an equally remarkable influence over those chemico-vital changes—life ; and in the beings low in the order of animated existence, it is more consistent with common observation to suppose that light reaches them not for the purposes of vision, but for those of life and health. The great probability is, that such animals possess merely common tactile

sensibility, and that through this power they hold intercourse with those around them. In the higher animals it has been demonstrated by the use of the microscope that the white cord-like bodies known as nerves are composed of extremely minute primitive fibres: that these fibres pursue their course without any anastomosis or fusion with others which may lie in the same sheath; that they turn upon themselves both at the centre and periphery, and thus form closed circles; and that the white matter of the brain and spinal cord is merely a condensed collection of the primitive fibres distributed throughout the system. Observation and actual experiment shew that these fibres are not generators, but merely conductors of the nervous force. In the brain and spinal cord, as well as in the substance of some nerves, a grey matter is observed which assumes different names according to its situation. When this is examined by the microscope it is found to consist, not of fibrous matter like the former, but of minute greyish globules or cells which contain the germs or elements of other and similar cells; these are congregated in parts so that the interstices may be traversed by the white fibres; in the interior of the brain these collections of grey matter are known by the name of ganglia, on the exterior of the brain they form the cortical substance; and there is much reason to suppose that the corpuscles or cells are engaged either directly or indirectly in the production of the nervous power. It is the opinion of physiologists that the grey or cineritious portion of the brain is the true organ of the mind, or is, at least, more immediately engaged in its manifestations; for it is a recognized fact that, other things being equal, the greater the quantity of grey matter, the more powerful and energetic is the mental character; and that in inferior animals, certain conditions being observed, the amount of intelligence displayed is in direct proportion to the quantity of cortical substance in the brain. Recent discovery has rendered it extremely probable that the corpuscles which form the grey matter, are not confined merely to the nervous centres, or even to the



sympathetic ganglia, in which they abound, but that they also exist in the circumferential parts, and especially in the skin. In the brain and spinal cord the white fibres pass among myriads of those bodies, and more particularly so where they bend or turn upon themselves; and in the skin where a repetition of this reflection of the primitive fibres on themselves occurs, greyish cells similar to those which constitute the cineritious substance of the brain are found congregated around the loops of the white nervous matter.

Now, applying these facts to the subject of Clairvoyance, it might be contended that as there exists such a strong analogy between the arrangement of the nervous matter in the skin and that of the same matter in the brain; and that as the latter is the material instrument of the mind, it does not seem improbable, much less impossible, that the functions of the central organs may be executed in an inferior degree by those at the periphery; and if what has been asserted by Mesmer, repeated by his disciples, and sanctioned by one of the ablest writers on Hypnotism be true, that in the Mesmeric condition the sensations are exalted in degree, and the powers of their instruments increased, then, by a parity of reasoning, it is not physically improbable that the skin may take cognizance of stimuli to which in the ordinary state it is indifferent. It is well known that by proper training the organs of the senses acquire the power of being acted on by very slight causes; advantage of this law of nervous action is taken by persons engaged in optical research: after remaining in a dark situation for some days the eye becomes so extremely sensitive that variations in light and shade, which would escape the detection of others, are easily observed. Artists by high cultivation acquire extreme delicacy in the sense of touch; and hearing, taste, and smell acquire corresponding degrees of acuteness in persons whose habits or pursuits favour their relatively frequent and special use. That in the first stages of the mesmeric state the senses become more susceptible of external impressions, may or may not be true;

the assertion seems not at variance with known facts ; and if the sensibility of the skin, for example, be very much increased, is it not probable that light, though usually recognized only by the eye, may so affect it as to produce the ordinary perception of a visible object ? Further, admitting the infinite porosity of matter, is it not possible that so many luminous undulations, which would not be appreciable in the waking state, might traverse even the most opaque body, so as to produce an effect on the supposed highly excitable nervous expansion in the skin, and thus for the time supersede common vision ? Such questions have a semblance of plausibility, and might be urged in support of the alleged phenomena ; and if met only by negative replies might have some weight in argument.

But the matter resolves itself into this—Are the pretended phenomena of Clairvoyance in accordance with the known laws which preside over organization and life, or are they not ? In the history of Mesmerism we find many of the most palpable absurdities disguised in all the diction of philosophy ; and persons who would scorn the idea of being thought credulous on other subjects, have unhesitatingly received them associated as articles of faith with the name of Animal Magnetism. It is true, our ideas of causation may be formed on insufficient bases, that our induction and generalisation may be premature and faulty, and that any application of these may be consequently erroneous ; but until positive proofs, that they affect a particular case, are really furnished, such sophisms ought to have no influence on our decisions. In physiology, as in the other uncertain sciences, there is much conjecture, many hypotheses, and some unsound conclusions ; but, on the contrary, patient research, untiring zeal, and the concurrence of opinions formed under dissimilar circumstances, tend to show, that in the government of animated beings nature follows an order as precise and immutable as any in the purely physical world ; that in the phenomena of vitality, certain effects follow certain causes ; and that such is the uniformity of the sequence to its



antecedent that the one being observed, the existence of the other may be inferred. In physiology, rules of action are as well known to preside as in any other department of natural science ; and hence it may with propriety be maintained, that under similar conditions, the same vital causes are always followed by the same results. Clairvoyance pre-supposes the transposition of the senses. Every external impression, whether originating in sight, hearing, touch, smell, or taste, must be conveyed to the sensorium by the nerves ; each organ of sensation has a nerve specially designed for its use ; and any lesion of that nerve correspondingly affects its power to transmit the impression. The question now becomes—Can an impression made on a nerve of special sense give origin to a perception different from that of which the nerve is the usual medium ? Can a stimulus applied to the auditory nerve, for example, produce the idea of taste ; or to the olfactory nerve, that of sound ? And, as applicable to the doctrine of Clairvoyance, is it possible for a ray of light impinging upon the nerves of common tactile sensibility to produce the ordinary idea of vision ; that is, can the stimulus of light applied to the skin give origin to the same mental condition, and impart the same information as if it had been allowed to fall upon the retina ? It would be impossible within the limits of this little work to detail the experiments which have been instituted by Bell, Hall, Majendie, Muller, Reid, and others, to prove that different nerves have assigned to them different functions ; those investigations have emphatically shown that such is not only the case, but that the power of one nerve can never be assumed by another of a different class. The vital properties of nervous matter seem to be as definite and unchangeable as the physical qualities of inorganic substances ; and it would be as reasonable to expect that the properties of phosphorous should become identical with those of sulphur, as that the nerves of touch should supersede those of vision. One blood-vessel may become obliterated, and its function be effectively represented by another ; for a

time the powers of the liver may be vicariously executed by the kidneys ; but so little is there of analogy between these and the nervous system, that the special office of different parts of the latter seems to be eternally and uniformly distinct. It is not contended that those vital qualities depend on any organic peculiarity of the nerves themselves, for they all display a striking similarity in their minute structure ; neither can it be affirmed that the cause is in the distal organ in which they ramify ; because it is not tenable that either is the seat of consciousness. The mind is localised in the brain, different parts of which are allotted to different and distinct functions, and it is consonant with reason and observation to suppose that every nerve of special sensibility is in connexion not only with a peripheral organ, but also with a central one. The perception of a visible object is neither in the eye nor in the optic nerve, but in a part of the brain dedicated by nature to the purpose ; and it would be as preposterous to imagine that the *central* organ of the nerves of touch should take cognizance of external luminous figures, as that the elasticity of a tendon should resemble or supersede the active contractility of muscular fibre. Vivisection is not necessary to convince every one of these truths ; any mild stimulus, such as a weak galvanic current, is sufficient to demonstrate on our own person what is really the function of a particular nerve. If this agent be applied to the tongue, the idea of taste is immediately excited ; to the organ of hearing, and the idea of sound follows ; to the eye, and that of light is produced ; to the organ of smell, and the perception of an odour is the consequence ; to the extremities of the fingers, and we imagine them in contact with a solid body ; and to the muscles, and the sense of muscular resistance becomes manifest. In such an experiment, we never, for example, have the perception of a luminous body when the galvanic influence is applied to the ends of the fingers. any more than that of a resisting body when applied to the retina ; in every instance the impression conveyed is that only which the



nerve ordinarily transmits; because the central grey matter which it traverses possesses merely a unity as a perceptive. The universality of these facts entitle them to a place among what are called natural laws and rules of action; they are invariable sequences to the operation of certain causes, and, other things being equal, always will be, as they always have been, correlative and uniform. When a natural law has been suspended, or the course of events altered, a miracle has been the result; Clairvoyance is nothing more or less than equivalent to such a suspension or alteration; but if miracles have never been manifested but for establishing some great, benevolent, and saving design, then, if it be admitted that no such design is involved in Clairvoyance, it necessarily follows that the alleged phenomena have no foundation except in the imagination or evil propensities of their supporters. An attempt has been made to reconcile the pretensions of Clairvoyance with known natural principles. If, as some writers and lecturers on Mesmerism or Hypnotism contend, the function of the organs of special sense be exalted so as to receive impressions which ordinarily could not be perceived; if the patient become so extremely docile, so susceptible of sympathetic influences, as readily to imitate the actions of those around him; if such a revivification of events long since forgotten, such an excited state of the memory, take place, as they frequently do during unsound sleep; and if contact with the skin so act on a vivid state of the imagination as to invest past impressions with the attributes of present realities; then, say they, the phenomena of Clairvoyance may be accounted for on rational causes. But however well meant such a mode of reasoning may be, and however creditable to the heads and hearts of those who receive it, still it is obviously inadequate to the purpose for which it is intended; like Phreno-mesmerism, Clairvoyance is at variance with itself, and cannot, therefore, be in harmony with the course of nature.

Calling to his recollection any experiments on this subject,

the reader will no doubt also remember the guesses, conjectures, failures, and occasional coincidences with which they were attended; and from his own personal observation he may not have been able to form a decided opinion either in affirmation or negation of the disputed doctrines. This unquestionably is the case with a great proportion of those who have turned their attention to Mesmerism. The wonders of Clairvoyance have been received and believed on the evidence of others. It may not be uninteresting or irrelevant to consider briefly the nature of the evidence thus afforded. That the statements of the person whose testimony relates to Clairvoyance should involve matters of easily ascertainable fact, of which he has had sufficient opportunity to judge, is a first principle of the greatest moment; but when two or more individuals, reporters of the public press for example, furnish their accounts of experiments, how often do they agree, not in matters of opinion, but in those of fact; and who that has not been present during the time those experiments were in progress, is competent to form any conclusion from the discrepancies? We ought to feel persuaded that the witness is influenced neither by passion nor interest in his evidence; but if vehement declamation, the application of the most disgraceful epithets, and regular pugilistic encounters, are any indices of a man's mental condition, then statements made by the advocates of the hypothesis under such a condition ought to be rejected; and if a share in the profits arising from the exhibitions, and the love of popularity, are included in the idea of interest, the witnesses may have the benefit of it also. If we find that a great number of persons, without suspicion of connivance, have concurred in their statements favourable to Clairvoyance, their testimony ought to have much weight; and the greater the improbability of the thing about which they agree, the more worthy of belief may it become; but so strong are the suspicions of collusion, and so little is there of concurrence of opinion, between the witnesses, that any deduction from their evidence must be made with



caution. In Clairvoyance, as in other matters, we ought to be influenced by our confidence in a certain uniformity of human character; if the witness have acquired such a reputation for veracity and honesty in his intercourse with his fellowmen as to entitle his evidence on general subjects to respect, his testimony in favour of the matter in dispute ought also to be respected; but when we find him to assert unhesitatingly that which is known to be in direct opposition to equally creditable statements, and moreover in manifest contradiction to the natural order of events, his declaration becomes entirely vitiated. It is not here contended, that the actions and arguments of those who oppose Mesmerism are immaculate; they may originate in conscientious motives, or they may not; some of them, to say the least, are not at all calculated to advance the interests they have espoused. This, however, is foreign to the question.

#### “ARTIFICIAL CATALEPSY”

Is the very paradoxical term applied to certain alleged phenomena involved in the doctrines of Mesmer. The nature, and, indeed, the very existence of the disease named *catalepsy* have been themes of sharp controversy among writers on medicine; but some well-authenticated cases of the malady are on record, so that doubt on the subject can hardly be said now to exist. Contrary to general opinion, the disease is characterised by extreme flexibility instead of inflexibility of the muscles, which permit the limbs to be placed at any angle with the body; and in whatever position they may be placed, in it they remain until the exciting causes subside. During the paroxysm there is always loss of consciousness, more or less complete; so that the power of volition over any part of the system is for the time lost. The cases exhibited in experiments in Mesmerism, and understood by many to be those of catalepsy, bear little resemblance, or rather no analogy, to the disease whose name has been misappropriated; for passes performed over an ex-

tremity are seen to be followed by intense and continued muscular contraction, without the slightest suspension of the current of thought; and instead of the atonic muscular condition of the limb which is a diagnostic of the disease, we find it so unyielding to an opposing force, as to require an extraordinary effort for its flexion. These differences alone constitute an essential and complete line of demarcation between real and pseudo-catalepsy; and other elements in the contrast will presently be discovered. For a non-professional person to form a correct idea of muscular action, it is necessary that he should have a general knowledge of the functions of the nervous system, of the different classes of nerves, and their uses in the animal economy. While the reader is engaged in the perusal of these pages, three distinct actions are necessary for the purpose: the heart is propelling the blood throughout his body, and its contractions and dilatations amount probably to seventy in a minute; the process of respiration continues, and partially renews the air in his lungs, perhaps twenty times during the same space; and, that he may continue to read, his fingers are engaged from time to time in turning over the leaves. Of the first act he is perfectly unconscious from any direct sensation, neither can he by any immediate effort accelerate or retard it; of the second, he may or may not be perfectly conscious, by a mandate of the will he may influence or even arrest it, yet, like the former, it maintains during the soundest sleep; but the last is in every sense of the word purely voluntary, arising from a certain motive in his mind, and regulated solely by the impulse of volition. Every one of these acts depends on muscular action; and as they differ materially from each other in kind, they cannot originate in precisely the same cause. Muscular contraction is produced by an application of the nervous force, and as we perceive there are modifications of that contraction, so likewise must there be modifications in the application of the force. Like other muscles, those of the arm, for example, are excited by the nervous influence; and if a nerve distributed



to them be examined, it will be found that some of the primitive fibres are in connexion merely with the grey matter of the spinal cord, and that others reach the brain. The latter, as before remarked, is the seat of consciousness and the will; the other is entirely independent of these powers; and hence it will readily be conceived that these fibres must respectively have different functions. Before the reader turns over a leaf, he must not only will to do so, but he must know what the condition and position of his hand are; this information is imparted by a set of fibres, the *sensory*, in connexion with the brain; and immediately a mandate of the will is conveyed by another set, the *motory*, to execute the act required. But if the brain of an animal be destroyed, or its connexion with the spinal cord interrupted, motions of the limb follow the application of a stimulus; yet this, it is obvious, cannot take place under any consciousness or volition of the animal; the impression is conveyed in a centripetal direction by the fibres in connexion with the spinal cord, the *excito-motory*, and the force which induces the muscular contraction by a returning set continuous with the other, the *reflecto-motory*. Hence may be explained many consentaneous movements, the phenomena of disease, of tetanus, and convulsions. The muscles, the active instruments of respiration, also acquire their first power from the same two classes of nerves; those of the reflex system continue the vital process during sleep or coma; the true cerebral fibres, uniting it to a certain extent in obedience to the will. The nerves which supply the heart are a part of a system over which we have no control; they belong to one beyond the influence of the will; but although such be strictly true, still there is reason to suppose that the laws under which they impart their influence are the prototypes of those which regulate the entire system.

Now, there is nothing more probable than that those different classes of nerves are so associated with each other both in distribution and function as to exert a reciprocal influence on each

other ; for the same harmony of design and effect which pervades every other part of creation, is also manifested in the phenomena of nervous action. It is often a matter of surprise that the pious eastern devotee should keep his body in a particular position for, it may be, a series of years ; that the arm, for example, should be kept elevated above the head in one unvarying state, without the slightest sign of weariness or suffering ; but if it be considered that the act first originated in an effort of the will, sustained by a true cerebral nervous force, and that by sympathy or association the reflex system of nerves afterwards superseded those of voluntary motion, we can easily conceive that until ankylosis of the joints took place, little exertion would be required on the part of the individual. Persons who continue such acts must possess much firmness and determination of character ; and the central organs of the brain, which the nerves of voluntary motion traverse, must be in a state of high developement. That the muscular rigidity exhibited in experiments on Mesmerism is produced partly through the true spinal, and partly through the true cerebral, nerves, is in apparent accordance with observation and reason ; and thus much must be conceded, that no effort of volition, however powerful, could enable a young, delicate person to sustain such enormous weights as they often do, and for such a period of time. It is usual for sceptics to attempt to prove that the will alone is the only cause of the muscular action, by submitting to carry weights equally heavy on their extended limbs, and for an equal length of time ; but the almost invariable failures which they experience, are an instructive verification of the adage, that the strength of the limbs is no criterion of that of the mind. A person who feigned catalepsy was brought into the presence of the celebrated Mr. Hunter under strong suspicions of the true nature of the case ; he thus addressed the surrounding students : “ You see, gentlemen, that the hand is supported merely in consequence of the muscles persevering in that action to which volition had excited them prior to the



cataleptic seizure. I wonder," continued he, "what additional weight they would support." He then attached a string, to which a weight was suspended, to the hand, still it remained in the same position; but while engaging the man in conversation, and thus throwing him off his guard, the cord was suddenly snipped, and as suddenly was the hand raised in the air; showing that the act was entirely under the control of the will. A modification of this experiment has been repeatedly made by the writer on "mesmerised" persons, and always with nearly the same result. If a steady pressure be exerted for a few seconds in a downward direction on the pseudo-cataleptic limb, and the pressure suddenly withdrawn, an upward motion immediately follows; and the extremity gains a position, which it maintains, considerably above that in which it was at first placed. This shows equally that the will participates in the cases. It may be objected, that any elastic body, such as a steel spring, when pressed upon, will regain its previous form by the removal of the pressure; but, let it be borne in mind, the body returns merely to the same state which it before held, when the opposing force is withdrawn. The following experiment was instituted to prove what was the effect of the passes in inducing muscular contraction. A boy, the muscles of whose limbs could be made rigid apparently by passes, without the loss of consciousness, and whose case was deemed satisfactory before a public audience, was brought forward at a private meeting for the purpose of more decidedly testing the matter; and, while his eyes were closed, the operator was desired to make the usual gesticulations over the arm, which was passively hanging by the side; no passes however were made; yet the arm slowly and steadily approached the horizontal position, and the muscles became so rigid that the limb could not be flexed but by very considerable external force. The operator was again requested to make the passes, but in an inverse order, so as to counteract those which the boy fancied had been formerly made; as before, nothing was

done; but under an erroneous impression, the boy allowed his muscles to become flaccid, and the arm dropt suddenly by the side. Cases of this nature might be recorded in great number: *ab uno disce omnes*. Persons, such as those who accompany lecturers on Mesmerism, used to the practice of making strong muscular efforts, acquire an extraordinary power and facility for the purpose, which do not entirely depend on full muscular developement. It is generally admitted that there is a sixth sense, that of muscular resistance. Touch might inform us of the existance of an external body, and perhaps of its temperature; but it can never communicate the idea of figure, solidity, or fluidity; these latter qualities are recognized through the nerves which supply the muscles, the organ of the sense to which we have alluded. It has been formerly remarked that every organ of sensation must have a proximal, as well as a distal organ; the distal organs of the sensation of resistance are the muscles; the central ones are in the brain; and, as all the senses may be rendered more acute by proper tuition, in consequence of an additional power acquired by their mental organs, so from analogy and observation, we are justified in believing that the parts of the brain designed for the reception of our impressions of resistance, do also become endowed with increased energy by use. Such a mode of reasoning is not only philosophical and sustained by fair induction, but it affords a satisfactory explanation of the feats witnessed in the ancient gymnasia, and in the circus of the present day; the cultivation and natural endowment of these cerebral organs lie at the very foundation of all systematic muscular exertion. Unless “Artificial Catalepsy” involve an abrogation of the the course of nature—and there are some apparently credulous and weak enough to suppose that those laws coeval with herself, may be cancelled by the magnetizer—it cannot be otherwise accounted for than on principles similar to, if not the same as, those thus briefly stated; and if the public knew a little more of their own organization, the wonder excited would be directed into a



legitimate feeling of admiration. Some truths are generally intermingled with the grossest fictions; but in the doctrines of Mesmerism how vastly do the absurdities preponderate! What was said in reference to another subject, may, perhaps, be more aptly applied to this: that it contains much that is new, and a little that is true, but the greater part of that which is new is not true, and all that is true is not new.

Like the North American aborigines, the disciples of Mesmer include a number of "Great Mystery or Medicine Men;" and we scarcely ever cease to hear of THE CURATIVE EFFECTS of the system. Among the diseases which are supposed to be influenced by the passes, rheumatism and paralysis occupy a prominent place. The former is essentially and truly an affection of the blood. The non-professional reader may probably be not aware that the blood is formed of an immense number of microscopic bodies, termed cells or corpuscles, floating in an albuminous saline fluid; these are of two kinds: reddish discs, on which the colour of the blood depends—the agents in the production of animal heat; and colourless globules, designed for the nutrition of the body. There is reason to believe that each blood cell is a monad, having an independent existence, and the power of reproducing its kind. The colourless globules contain a substance named *proteine* in a state of fluidity; it is extensively diffused throughout creation; it constitutes one of the chief elements of vegetable food; and associated with certain proportions of sulphur and phosphorous, it forms the basis of the most important organs which constitute an animal. Now, it is a remarkable fact, that this substance, *proteine*, is exceedingly prone, under certain circumstances, to enter into combination with the oxygen of the atmosphere, and form two distinct oxides; these may be produced in the laboratory of the chemist, and in the animal body. In rheumatism the colourless blood cells contain an excess of the oxides of *proteine*; they consequently acquire an increased affinity for the tissues which the blood supplies; the nutritive process is acce-

erated ; in parting with the excess of oxygen, a slow but true combustion ensues ; and the result is properly termed inflammation of the joints and other parts. Medicine has not only the power to prevent the formation of an excess of these oxides, but it can diminish the quantity already in the system, and thus cure the disease. For Mesmerism to effect the same purposes, it must have an equal power ; but from what has been already said of it, and from what is known of the malady, it is not consistent either with observation or reason that it can manifest such a power. Paralysis, again, may be either centripetal or centrifugal ; it may begin either at the circumference or in the centre of the nervous system ; but in whatever mode it originates, it must have a cause. That cause is a disorganization or change of structure in the nervous matter ; for every properly conducted examination after death has demonstrated the existence of a structural change ; and the use of the microscope has shown the primitive fibres of the nervous centres to be not only changed in consistence, but broken, and their arrangement confused. Let the reader seriously ask himself—if he can preserve his gravity on such a subject—whether Mesmerism is adequate to restore this altered composition—this structural derangement—those solutions of continuity—and the consequent loss of power of which they are the antecedents ? May Providence aid the afflicted who trust in means so disproportionate to the object ! The reader may possibly remember the case of the man who applied to Sir H. Davy for the purpose of trying the remedial effects of nitrous oxide gas. Previous to doing anything, Sir Humphrey inserted the bulb of a small thermometer into the patient's mouth for the purpose of ascertaining the temperature ; the latter was under the strong impression that something—he did not really know what—was to be done which would cause him to jump and laugh ; but although he did not inhale the smallest quantity of the gas, still so powerfully did the application of the thermometer act on his excited fancy, that he broke into a loud shout of laughter,



and made all the gesticulations which follow the inhalation of that curious compound. A case lately came under the writer's notice which equally illustrates the influence of the imagination. A female for many years had been in the habit of taking six grains of powdered opium every night at bed-time ; the person who supplied her with the article, on one occasion, could not let her have as much as she required ; he made the experiment of giving, unknown to her, six papers, each containing six grains of *powdered rhubarb* ; this innoxious substance was taken unsuspectingly, just as the opium had been ; yet the woman returned at the end of six days for a further supply, unconscious of having been made a dupe. Rheumatism is frequently confounded with neuralgic affections, over which strong mental impressions sometimes have a powerful influence ; and this may account for some of the pretended cures. In paralysis there are certain tests which ought to be applied, otherwise there is no certainty of the disease being what it is alleged to be.

By some, Mesmerism and witchcraft are held to mean one and the same thing ; and even the advocates of the system encourage the revival of a superstition, the inheritance of an age of ignorance and crime. If Mesmerism be witchcraft, then let our Coast Guard beware of allowing the magnetizers to put off to sea in sieves ; and let Lloyds' Agents ascertain the possibility of raising a storm by means of soap suds. By others, Mesmerism is ascribed to the agency of the devil. If ignorance of the subject professed, and the enlistment of fraud to fill up the hiatus ; if the implication of the grossest and most obscene exhibitions, and the encouragement of abuses of the gifts with which nature has blessed us ; if the estrangement of parent from offspring, and of the child for its lawful protector ; if, in short, the destruction of those principles which characterize a moral and refined people be included in such an idea, then there are more truths involved in it than many may feel at first disposed to admit.